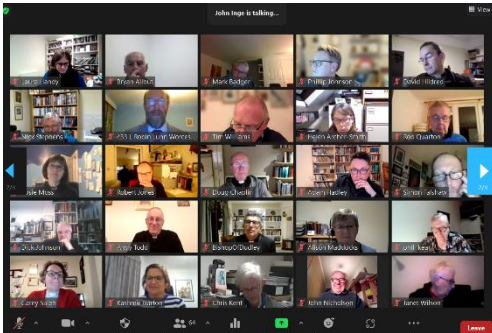


## WORCESTER DIOCESAN SYNOD

### the Fourth Session of the Eighteenth Synod and a general meeting of the WORCESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED

Held over Zoom on Monday 7 November 2022



Opening prayers were led by the Revd Sarah Dangerfield, Area Dean of Pershore and Evesham.

Fraser Oates asked a **question under Standing Order 71:**  
*"As the diocese continues its Open Conversations consultations and transformation and change programme (at diocesan and deanery levels), what assurances can be made for a parish church which is by definition healthy, sustainable, collaborative, sharing, and missional, that it will be able to retain its own parochial governance, tradition, and identity and not be amalgamated into a joint council / benefice / BMO reordering / 'minster community' without its consent?"*

This was answered by Archdeacon Nikki:

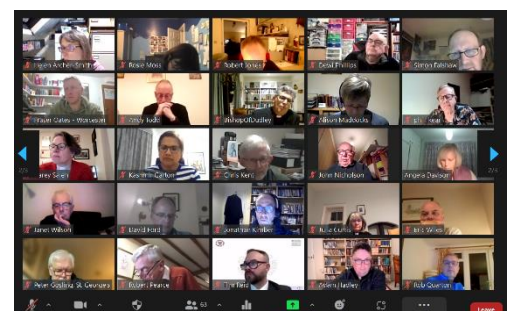
*We want all our churches to be as healthy and sustainable as possible, and as part of our commitment to transformation and change we offer options to support them in this - for example, with a Mission Accompanier.*

*The MA is there to help churches clarify their unique vocation, which fits with their tradition and context. This is why we say 'one size doesn't fit all'.*

*In terms of structure, whilst the question raises four different structural options, in every case a PCC would be consulted. Establishing a joint council goes further and needs annual parochial meeting consent, pastoral schemes require consultation with clergy, PCCs, patrons and are also open to the public. A Bishop's Mission Order does not remove parochial governance, although it may create a separate initiative in parallel to it - but again, parishes are consulted. All the processes for these are laid down by law to give extra comfort to parishes.*

*I would also comment that working collaboratively with neighbouring parishes does not necessarily require any formal amalgamation, and will often be done relationally within existing structures, simply to more efficiently undertake backroom functions so volunteers can focus on mission and ministry. Local discussions underway in Redditch and in the Malvern and Upton deanery are creatively engaging in discussions to explore various ways of doing this.*

*Finally, I'd disagree that parish churches are by definition healthy, sustainable, collaborative, sharing and missional. Many are, for which we rejoice, and will continue to support them to be even more so. But we are having to look at solutions for some parish churches which have not been able to appoint any wardens, where the congregations are now in low single figures and there is no-one willing to serve as treasurer or to volunteer to look after the building. In such cases it is often the wish of the congregation to be redesignated as, for example, a chapel of ease, joining with a neighbouring parish in order to stay open in an appropriately reduced way.*



Diocesan Secretary, John Preston read a **statement on support for heating costs** for clergy and church workers thanks to a grant from the Church Commissioners.



Bishop John gave his **Presidential Address**, highlighting the fact that there is lots in our world to concern us at the moment; the cost of living, war in Ukraine and chaos in Government.

He said: “A recent visit to Worcester Foodbank showed me that demand has been increasing exponentially with so many children and families currently suffering. The YMCA does great work to support people and I am grateful that the CEO Annette Daly will speak to us this evening. I will shortly be leaving for Peru where the

scale of the problems is even worse. I am always moved by vision, energy, faith and commitment of church, there and also in our other link diocese of Morogoro. Many of the items on the Synod agenda are linked. We need to plan how to best use the resources at our disposal to reach as many people as possible, both with material help and the good news of God’s love in Jesus. This evening we will hear about a robust plan through which we will be able to share hope. I hope you will welcome it.” [Read the full address.](#)

To begin the item on **Financial Crisis Community Impact**, Annette Daly, CEO of YMCA Worcestershire spoke on ‘The impact of the challenging economic situation on our communities’, focussing particularly the impact on young vulnerable people supported by the YMCA. Annette explained that the YMCA serves the local community regardless of their faith, gender, or age. She highlighted a new research report recently published which highlights five impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on young people:

- Food is the first thing to be cut
- Energy bills are rocketing, particularly for those on pre-pay meters
- People have low levels of financial resilience
- Mental health is worsening
- People feel they have very little hope – their aspirations have been halted.

Annette went on to explain some of the ways the YMCA tries to help – linking with local supermarkets to give out end of date food, bringing people together to cook meals and help learn skills, and fundraising for Christmas presents. Annette challenged the group to think about how we could respond both as a Church and individual and identify any barriers which need to be overcome. There was then a discussion on this topic in small groups which was brought together in a short plenary.

[See Annette’s slides.](#)



Archdeacon Nikki introduced the next item which focussed on **diocesan overview planning**. Synod were considering the result of a planning overview to draw together our plans as a diocese into a cohesive whole. [See her slides here.](#) She said:

“As I introduce our emerging plans as a diocese for the coming years, I want to first step back and remind us of the bigger picture. I am called, along with all of you, to play a part in fulfilling both the great commandment and the great commission. I am here because I love God, and want to do so with all my heart, mind and soul, and I love my neighbour, the people around me, and want them to have life in all its fulness, knowing God’s love for them, becoming disciples who understand what it is to be caught up in the kingdom of God, followers of Jesus, baptised and deepening in their faith. I long to see our communities transformed as church members reach out and serve those most in need in these troubling times.”

Nikki set out a plan which identifies three priorities where we will focus the majority of time and resources over the next few years – children and young people, church renewals and new worshipping communities. These will be underpinned by a further priority to provide better coaching and training for everyone involved in church leadership, both lay and ordained.

These will be focused priorities while we also continue to support the ongoing life of all churches – for example through the Mission Accompanier scheme, an emerging rural strategy, and input for smaller churches and those in lower income communities. Nikki explained that there's something for everyone in the plan.



Synod then split into smaller groups to talk about what was exciting about these priorities, the difference that they might make and where the challenges might be. Comments in plenary afterwards included the importance of remembering older people, support for new worshipping communities, helping parishes to get behind the plan and to really live it, and reaching out to parents not just children and young people.

Bishop John moved that:

*“This Synod endorses the direction set out in DS 22/11, and asks Bishop’s Council to seek to secure funding from the national church and any other external sources that will make it easier for us to carry out these plans.”*

This was carried with just one abstention.

Chair of the DBF, the Revd Andy Todd, presented the proposed 2023 DBF budget. [See his slides](#). He explained that for 2023, the budgeted income for the DBF is £7.96m with an expenditure of £8.19m (compared to £8.19m in 2022). This will result in a £25k surplus – essentially a break-even budget for the year.

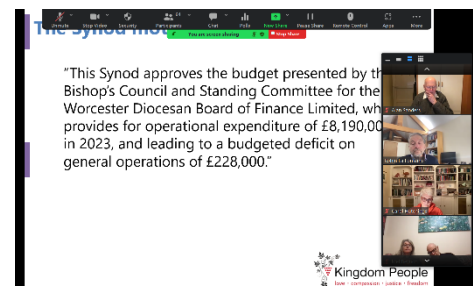
Andy said that the cost-of-living crisis is a huge backdrop to next year’s budget and we want to do what we can to address this issue for clergy. This year there is no contribution to the pension deficit that we have been paying for the last few years, which enables some increase in stipends and wages without affecting ministry share. Bishop’s Council approved a 2% increase last April which was included in this year’s budget and from January 2023 the proposed increase is 4% - 2% of which is funded by the reduced pension contributions and 2% by an equivalent increase in ministry share. Andy explained that there had been debate around whether this was enough, but that it was important to balance the response for clergy with the burden of increasing ministry share. For 2023, ministry share receipts have been budgeted at £4.27m, but there is a big unknown of how much the cost-of-living crisis will impact on parishes and individuals.

Synod had the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the DBF’s budget for 2023. Then Andy moved that:

*“This Synod approves the budget presented by the Bishop’s Council and Standing Committee for the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited, which provides for expenditure of £8,190,000 in 2023, and leading to a budgeted deficit of £228,000.”*

This was approved with one abstention.

The meeting briefly became a meeting of the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd to pass the following resolutions:



Resolution No.1. The Revd Andy Todd, Chair of the DBF, moved that:

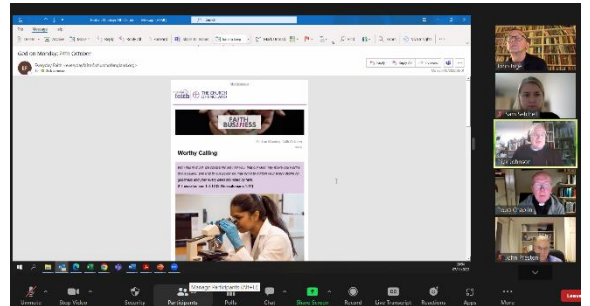
*“The Company hereby approves the budget of the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited for 2023, as approved by the Diocesan Synod in its immediately preceding business.”*

Resolution No.2: The Revd Julia Curtis, Chair of the Audit, Risk and Challenge Committee moved:

*“That Crowe LLP be appointed as Auditors to The Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited”*

Both resolutions were passed with one abstention.

The Revds Dick Johnson (Faith at Work in Worcestershire) and Doug Chaplin (Discipleship & Lay Training Officer) introduced the Church of England’s **Everyday Faith portal**, demonstrating how this resource can be used to support church members in their journeys of discipleship. Dick started by explaining that the portal is designed to help people find God in their everyday life. Members were then shown a short film highlighting the work of the town centre Chaplains in Pershore ([watch it here](#)) before Doug talked through the portal ([visit it here](#)). Members were asked to have a look at it and see how they might make use of it ahead of the March synod when there will be a longer discussion.



The following people were elected to the **Worcester Diocesan Board of Education (DBE)**:

Archdeaconry of Dudley:

- Clergy: James Treasure
- Lay: Paul Latham

Archdeaconry of Worcester:

- Clergy: Tim Williams
- Lay: Derek Valentine, Michael Hunter

Archdeacon Robert closed the meeting in prayer.

**Date of next Meetings:**

- Saturday 11 March, 9.30 am in Worcester
- Monday 26 June, 7 pm (in-person)
- Monday 6 November, 7 pm (by Zoom)